

What's Hot

New designs as well as evolving traditional styles are changing popular interior looks and the market for contract framing. Here are the latest colors and design trends as seen at the latest Fall Market at High Point

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The very popular color combination of blue and brown expands from fabrics to furniture in this striped display cabinet from GuildMaster. The design is repeated on the metal base.

The Fall 2005 High Point International Home Furnishings Market was held October 20-26 in High Point, NC. With more than 11 million square feet of exhibit space, it is the largest home furnishings market in the world. Buyers for the nation's retailers—furniture stores, department stores, specialty gift stores, and catalog companies—throng to High Point to purchase inventory and to get a feel for current and upcoming trends. Here's a look at the trends on display from the 3,000 exhibitors at High Point.

Style Trends

Although many exhibitors like to show unusual pieces to create excitement in their booths, there was a strong current of traditional furniture styles—both Old World European and American Country. The charm of Tuscany endures, using designs and colors to create the Italian country atmosphere the name evokes. The popularity of oversized furniture pieces continues, such as massive eight-foot-tall bookcases and armoires.

Contemporary furniture also remains strong, with sleek, simple lines and squarish shapes dominating. Comfort appears to be optional, as some of the sofas look just plain hard. Very dark wood, very light natural wood, and chrome—shiny or brushed—seem to be the favorite materials. Fabrics may be dark or neutral, especially in monochromatic schemes. These contemporary pieces are often shown in a “metro mix” that may include plaid pillows or other “softening” elements.

A multicultural “global fusion” pervades the accessories market, including bedding, draperies, pillows, and a variety of accessories. The look is exotic but does not represent any distinct culture. Instead, it is a blending of motifs, colors, and styles incorporating a wide array of traditions from Asia, India, Central and

in Interiors?



Using black, white, gray, red, and brown, Great Nordic Design creates pillows with bold, graphic designs. Stripes and blocks dominate the collection.

South America, and Africa. The result is bold colors in unusual combinations, silk and satin fabrics, a profusion of beads and sequins, and lots of embroidery. There are bright versions with lots of pizzazz and neutral-color “Zen” versions.

Another popular style in accessories could be called “retro-modern.” Incorporating updated op-art designs and retro color combinations, this style feels new to young consumers and familiar to baby boomers (who may or may not be ready to embrace these looks again.)

Popular Motifs

A swirling filigree design seems to be everywhere—on furniture, rugs, in the background of art prints, on vases, decor fabrics and fireplace screens. Scribbles and simple linework are a related trend that appears frequently on fabrics and in artwork.

Seashells, both real and in pictures, are very strong. Lamps, mirrors,



From blond to black, from silver to painted blue, the showrooms at High Point displayed a wide spectrum of colors and finishes in wood furniture, intended to appeal to a diverse range of consumers.



“Park Avenue Stripe” from Casa Fiora uses the “trend-right” color combination of green and brown to create an opulent fabric made from taffeta and silk. Note the filigree pattern in the door and the paisley pattern of the chair fabric. Both are significant current trends.



Sleek black wood in a contemporary design provides a strong contrast for the coral-colored depictions of sea coral on cream fabric from Lee Industries. Coral is an important version of orange in today’s design market.

and photo frames heavily encrusted with natural shells are being shown not just for seaside decorating but also as part of an elegant coastal environment for inlanders as well.

Stripes are definitely in style, especially a mix of narrow and wide together in one design. Circles within circles continue to be popular as well.

Trend Colors

It is a brown world. Brown was expected to become popular. It usually does in times of war, social uncertainty, or economic hardship. But this time it has infiltrated even the youth market, paired with bright pink or lime green (lime green is still growing strong). In home furnishings, blue is the clear favorite as a partner for brown. Blue and brown is shown together everywhere and in every combination: French blue with chocolate brown, pale aqua with chestnut, navy blue and tan. In one form or another, all of the other colors are finding ways to be paired with brown—red with brown, gold with brown, and brown as part of many multicolor mixes.

Blues are also doing very well, especially greenish blues like turquoise and aqua. Pale silver blue in sofas and chairs is shown as classy and elegant. A pale silver green is used for the same effect.

Pink is growing stronger, moving beyond bedding and youth products into an upscale style paired with black or gray. A bright pink is paired with orange in vibrant accessories aimed at the female consumer.

Spice colors used together create a popular combination: cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, turmeric, jalapeno, often accented with a “surprise color” like olive green or gray.

There is a wide range of wood colors, from bleached “palm beach” to rich chocolate brown. One standout is the Ebony Carlton Manor collection from Pulaski, which uses black stain on cherry for a unique, very dark, complex finish. Black finishes, both stained and painted, were popular for Tuscan, contemporary, country, and even baby furniture.

Worn white and antiqued finishes in general continue to be strong, looking somewhat less shabby than in the past couple of High Point shows, but still distinctly weathered.

Licensing

Licensing—attaching a popular name and image to a product even before the consumer sees it—remains very strong. The Ernest Hemingway Collection is a star performer. Now in its sixth year, the collection is licensed in numerous categories, from wallpaper to lamps to framed art in addition to the extensive furniture line. Whether evoking Hemingway’s Paris apartment, an African hunting expedition, or his tropical Florida estate, the character is masculine, with strong use of leather and wood.

The huge and lucrative popularity of the Hemingway products may have inspired Bassett’s John Elway Home Collection, a line of furniture designed to capture the foot-



These posh pillows are part of the "Amethyst" collection from Feather-sound, featuring dimensional fabrics in variations of deep plum. Purple continues to be popular, especially in rich, dark versions.

ball star's "love of the great outdoors" and his appreciation of home and family. Another line targeted to the male consumer is the NBA At Home Collection, a line of tables, chairs, leather sofas—even a vending machine—featuring names and logos of teams of the NBA. On the softer side of licensing, bubbly Food Network show host Rachel Ray is endorsing a line of kitchen and entertainment furniture.

Lifestyle Trends

Lifestyle marketing—connecting products to a lifestyle—is especially popular in home furnishings. Many believe that the "cocooning" of the 1990s is being replaced with "hiving," in which the home is not a protective nest but a "command central"—the hub for a family's busy life outside of the home. This home is comfortable, easy to maintain, and has a great "media center" formerly known as the "TV room." Luxury in everyday living retains its luster, with just as much opulence but less clutter. Posh fabrics, plush pillows, oversized beds, and spa bathrooms are elements of this trend.

The single consumer is gaining attention, as marketers become more aware of their numbers. It is estimated that more than 30 percent of baby boomers are single, about 36 percent of Gen X (30-39), and 78 per-



This club chair in classic brown leather is part of the NBA At Home "Oxford Collection." Although the chair is available in other colors, leather products at High Point were frequently shown in traditional browns.

Uplifting Colors Dominate 2006 Contract Forecast

Contract markets will see colors in contrast and bright hues in combination in 2006, according to color designers at the International Conference of the Color Marketing Group, based in Alexandria, VA. This international, not-for-profit association of 1,300 color designers forecasts colors one to three years in advance for all industries, manufactured products, and services. The following colors represent contract industries, including health care, hospitality/entertainment, retail, institutional/public spaces, and office. The colors indicate a direction or a color shift from 2005 to 2006. For 2006 there are 17 colors included in the CMG's Contract Color Directions®. These are:

- Golden Eye – A fashion-driven color reminiscent of saris and Chinese silks.
- Margherita – Rejuvenating, influence of green on yellow, high tech color.
- "Creamy" Hollandaise – A not too toned, not too clean, yellow.
- Franciscan Fog – A mysterious purple gray; a fusion of sexiness, utility and luxury.
- Trench Coat - An architectural color, complex and hand forged.
- Snappy – A "get real" orange. Copper based and Eastern influenced.
- Beautiful in matte or shiny metallic finish.
- Santa Claya – A blush of color; brings warmth to ordinary beige.
- Sweet Melon – Like a slice of fresh fruit, enlivening, cosmetic color, true to the heart of coral.
- Simply Pink – A retro influenced color, think 70's graphic design and Schiaparelli pink.
- Rubaline – A Crown jewel, regal; a historical magenta with a global past.
- Tokyo Green – An under 30's urban international green. Assertive, in-your-face, in a nice way.
- Mill Valley - A botanical blue based green, refreshing and fashion forward.
- Blue Bling – European influence, true blue, honest, invigorating, an action-oriented color.
- My Blue Heaven – A bit of calm and serenity; water based clear blue not too icy or cold.
- Bayview – A blue green with a tranquil yet majestic feeling; a complement to brown, gold and pink.
- Luv-ender – A magical and playful red-influenced periwinkle, intended as an accent with pink and coral.
- Beep-Beep – A vivid and bright true yellow that sings with raw energy; born in the 60's, matured in the 70's and alive and well today in Asian design.



Bursting with color in bright, fresh combinations, these rugs from Company C are good examples of the many vibrant design options currently offered in home accessories. Consumers seem to be responding well to strong, unique designs like these.

cent of Gen Y (18-29). Many of these, including the majority of the boomers, live alone. They have some discretionary income but often occupy a small living space. They do not need a large, formal dining suite; they are looking for a couple of important furniture pieces and a small selection of great accessories.

The Bottom Line

Variety is not only the spice of life; it is also the key to survival for many home decor companies. Only a few companies try to maintain a niche market—most have diversified to appeal to a wider spectrum of consumers.

The six-month cycle of the American furniture industry creates a challenging “what’s new?” attitude for those in the industry. A strong core of established consumer favorites spiced up with a healthy infusion of “new trend” offerings is the path chosen by most exhibitors at High Point. ■

Vivian Kistler, CPG, GCE, has been tracking trends for nearly 20 years. As an active member and senior chairholder of the Color Marketing Group, she combines information from CMG, her extensive travels to foreign and American trade shows, and her personal system for tracking trends to evaluate and forecast color and design trends. She is the editor of Color Names Reference, which contains 37,000 color names and other information about colors, as well as www.coloranddesignreport.com.

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